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C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 001917

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NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE AND IPA; NSC FOR ABRAMS/DORAN/LOGGERFO

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/11/2016

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SUBJECT: PALESTINIAN PRISONERS PROPOSE "NATIONAL ACCORD
DOCUMENT"

REF: OSC:GMP20060511542002 WAFA NEWS AGENCY MAY 10 2006

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles. Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

¶1. (C) The "National Accord Document" put out by prominent Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails on May 10 has been placed on the agenda of the "National Dialogue" due to be held on May 24-25. However, initial tepid Hamas reactions have exacerbated concerns among Palestinian observers that the National Dialogue will be largely ceremonial, and may do little to promote Palestinian unity.

Document Details

¶2. (U) The National Accord Document (full text in ref) is described by WAFA - the PA's official news agency - as calling for "Unity, Closing Ranks, and Supporting the PLO and the National Authority - President and Government." It is signed by prominent Palestinian prisoners:

- Fatah - Marwan Barghouti
- Hamas - Sheikh Abdel Khaliq Natsheh
- PFLP - Abd-al-Rahim Malouh
- DFLP - Mustafa Badarinah
- PIJ - Bassam al-Saadi

¶3. (U) The document features 18 points of agreement as representing a minimum national Palestinian consensus; the following are the most significant:

- the Palestinian people seek to establish an independent state with Jerusalem as its capital, on all the territories occupied in 1967;
- the right of return for refugees;
- the liberation of all prisoners and detainees;
- expediting implementation of the Cairo Understandings of 2005, particularly the entry of Hamas and PIJ into the PLO, and the role of the PLO as the sole legitimate representative of the Palestinian people;
- reiterating the option of resistance, while also employing all other means of negotiations, political, and popular activities to end the occupation;
- drawing up a Palestinian plan for the unification of all factions;
- mobilizing Arab and Islamic support for the Palestinian people;
- maintaining a balance between the President and the Prime

Minister;
-- ending the "unjust siege" imposed on the Palestinian
people by the U.S. and Israel.

Reactions

¶4. (C) President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) announced his "adoption" of the document late on May 10, describing it as a realistic political vision which "to a large extent is in harmony with what I am thinking of." Sources in the President's office say he plans to put it on the agenda of the National Dialogue, which is now set to start on May 24.

¶5. (C) Hamas PLC member Mushir al-Masri told reporters that he had not seen the document and said it is too early to judge its authenticity. He said that Hamas signer Abdel Khaliq Natsheh and all imprisoned Hamas leaders in Israeli jails are politically relevant, but that the document had not been formally approved by the Hamas leadership. He expressed opposition to anything in the document that might be construed to represent recognition of Israel. Fatah PLC member Issa Qaraqi opined that the document represents the consensus of all factions and would be an acceptable starting point for the National Dialogue. He took issue with Masri's points, saying that Hamas needed to reconsider its positions on a range of issues and that Abu Mazen had asked Hamas leaders during recent meetings to agree to principles similar to those contained in the document.

¶6. (C) Fatah leader and former PLC member Qadoura Faris said that Hamas would make a significant mistake if it failed to endorse this document, particularly as it is signed by important jailed factional leaders. He thought the document

represented a half-way point between all the factions (Comment: In fact, PIJ included a reservation regarding negotiations. End comment). He also expressed concern with Masri's points, saying that hopes for progress in the National Dialogue are bleak if Hamas is not able to agree to these principles. Faris, noting Abu Mazen's declaration that the document would be put on the agenda for the National Dialogue, observed that the Dialogue would not be worth holding if Hamas refuses to endorse the document - and that Hamas would be the party to bear the consequences.

National Dialogue Update

¶7. (C) The PLO Executive Committee, meeting on May 11, agreed to issue invitations for the National Dialogue to be held on May 24 and 25. The meeting will be held simultaneously in Gaza and Ramallah, and under the auspices of Abu Mazen. The agenda is to include consideration of the current economic and political situation, national unity, Israeli PM Olmert's Convergence Plan, and restructuring of the PLO. The National Accord Document is to be considered under the national unity rubric.

Comment

¶8. (C) Prisoners play an important role in Palestinian society; the support of Marwan Barghouti and other factional leaders lends increased significance to the document, which embodies a number of long-standing Palestinian goals. The document is a positive step in the Palestinian political context, but it does not meet the Quartet's requirements. Local media commentary has suggested that its language regarding the establishment of a Palestinian state on lands occupied in 1967 could represent a back-door way for Hamas to accept the existence of Israel. In sum, the initiative could be a positive development if properly used by Abu Mazen. Attention now shifts to Hamas' reaction. Palestinian observers continue to be pessimistic about the success of the

National Dialogue unless and until Hamas is seen to agree to the principles contained in the National Accord Document.

WALLES